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**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**
2021 session

Virtual, 3–7 May 2021

Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity,
including indigenous, minority and regional languages and
multilingual issues**

Pronunciation of indigenous place names: inclusion of audio files in the Quebec place names database

Summary**

The Commission de toponymie exercises its mandate to officialize place names against a backdrop of complex issues, in particular the imperative to reconcile the identity needs of the Francophone majority in Quebec and those of the various indigenous communities.

The Commission is eager to preserve and promote Amerindian and Inuit place names, which are a precious part of the intangible cultural heritage of Quebec, and to ensure that this heritage is passed on from generation to generation.

In view of the principle that places should have a single place name, and given the need for place names to be understood by non-experts and serve as effective landmarks, the Commission elected to officialize indigenous place names using the roman alphabet, all while respecting the standardized writing systems used by the various nations and communities.

Nevertheless, in addition to officializing names of indigenous origin, the Commission also adds traditional (unofficial) indigenous place names in various indigenous languages to the Quebec place names database every year. To date, the Commission has added over 1,500 traditional indigenous place names to the online database.

In December 2019, as the International Year of Indigenous Languages drew to a close, the Commission started including audio files of the pronunciation of indigenous place names in the Quebec place names database. The Commission worked with the Avataq Cultural Institute in order to ensure the accessibility of this entirely new way of promoting indigenous place names.

* [GEGN.2/2021/1](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/).

** The full report was prepared by Marie-Ève Bisson, Commission de toponymie du Québec, Canada. It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2021/60/CRP.60, in the language of submission only, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/.



As at 20 January 2021, 411 official names in Inuktitut, Innu and Attikamek, together with audio files, had been published online.

Initially, the Commission aims to include in its database audio pronunciations of any new place names of indigenous origin that it officializes. Ultimately, the hope is that audio pronunciations will be available for all the indigenous place names stored in the database.
